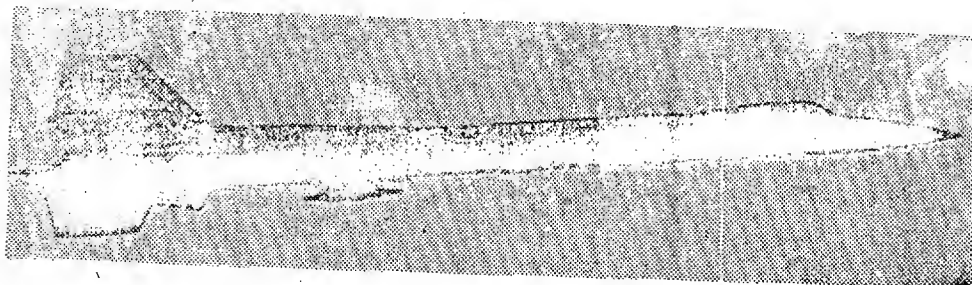


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New Secret Super-Jet Revealed by Johnson



This is the supersecret A-11 jet interceptor, the existence of which was revealed by President Johnson yesterday. He said it far exceeds the performance of any aircraft in use today.—AP Wirephoto.

A-11's Speed Said to Top All Others

By GARNETT D. HORNER
Star Staff Writer

The United States has secretly and successfully developed a new jet military plane whose performance "far exceeds that of any other aircraft in the world today," President Johnson announced yesterday.

The President told his first "live" televised press conference that the new plane, known as the A-11, has been tested in sustained flight at more than 2,000 miles an hour, flying over 70,000 feet high. It has a long range of "thousands of miles."

Beyond that, the President and other Government officials would not go in disclosing details of the performance of the A-11.

Mr. Johnson said several of the advanced experimental jet aircraft are now being flight-tested at Edwards Air Force Base in California to determine their capability as long-range interceptors.

Sidesteps Question

A Government official giving newsmen some slight additional background on the A-11 after the President's press conference was asked if it was intended to try to use the plane to intercept missiles as well as bombers. He refused to say.

This official did say, however, that it was his information that the plane was not designed as a bomber.

Continued

The Government briefing official noted, however, that the plane also has great potential reconnaissance capability.

President Johnson disclosed that the A-11 has an air-to-air missile system.

Development of a supersonic commercial transport aircraft will be greatly assisted by the lessons learned from developing the A-11 to fly at more than three times the speed of sound, the President said.

He explained that one of the most important technological achievements in the A-11 project has been "the mastery of the metallurgy and fabrication of titanium metal which is required for the high temperatures experienced by aircraft traveling at more than three times the speed of sound."

A Government official pointed out, however, that it should be recognized that the A-11 military plane could not be converted to a transport and that a major independent development program still is necessary to produce a supersonic transport. The President told his press conference that arrangements are being made to make all the important technical developments available under appropriate safeguards to private companies directly engaged in the program to develop a supersonic transport.

Gives His Reasons

In fact, the President said, he was disclosing the existence of the hitherto secret A-11 in order to permit "orderly exploitation of this advanced technology in our military and commercial planes."

He said development of the A-11 has been made possible by major advances in aircraft technology of great significance to both military and commercial applications. He said these advances will facilitate "the achievement of a number of important military and commercial requirements."

The President disclosed that the A-11 project was first started in 1959. He said appropriate members of the Senate and House have been kept fully informed on the program.

Disclosure of the A-11 project raised some questions about why the Air Force has been pressing for funds to develop an improved manned interceptor plane for which it was said the funds had been held back by the Pentagon high command, when the Air Force top brass obviously knew all about the A-11.

Rigid Security Used

The only answer obtained from a high Government source was that the performance of the A-11 would have to be taken into account in assessing any new aircraft.

There was some speculation that the Air Force might have made proposals for new plane programs to be debated in Congress as part of the "cover" to maintain secrecy about the A-11 project.

Officials said money was appropriated for the A-11 program and it was managed in the normal manner of classified projects, with members of the appropriate congressional committees being kept informed under the highest possible security.

There was no answer as to when the President intends to ask the Congress for funds to put the plane into quantity production.

Mr. Johnson said the A-11 is manufactured by the Lockheed Aircraft Corp. at Burbank, Calif. Its engine, the J-58, was designed and built by the Pratt and Whitney Aircraft Division, United Aircraft Corp. The experimental fire control and air-to-air missile system for the A-11 was developed by the Hughes Aircraft Co.

Remains Classified

"In view of the continuing importance of these developments to our national security," the President said, "the detailed performance of the A-11 will remain strictly classified and all individuals associated with the program have been directed to refrain from making any further disclosure."

The Government official briefing reporters later would not even say whether the A-11 has more than one jet engine or how many men are in its crew.

In connection with the commercial supersonic transport development program, the question arose as to whether Lockheed has achieved any advantage over other manufacturers because of its experience with the A-11.

Officials said that Lockheed has developed the A-11 as a special project, entirely segregated from its transport division. They emphasized that all aircraft manufacturers have been briefed on the special design features of the A-11 which may have application to supersonic transport. They added that relevant data learned from the A-11 program will continue to be made available to competing firms.

Report Is Scheduled

The President said he will release tomorrow a report on the supersonic transport program, making a number of recommendations dealing with the financing and management of the program.

This report has been analyzed by Government officials concerned and on the basis of that analysis, a decision will be made on how the Government will proceed, the President said.

The major issues involve what proportion of the funds for development of a supersonic transport shall be put up by the Government and how much by the industry, which is reported demanding a 90 per cent Government contribution.

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